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INFO RUEHTH/AMEMBASSY ATHENS 7008  
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SUBJECT: ANKARA MEDIA REACTION REPORT  
MONDAY, MARCH 13, 2006

#### In Today's Papers

Erdogan Meets AKP MPs at Weekend Gathering  
All papers: At a gathering of ruling AK Party lawmakers in Kizilcahamam near Ankara over the weekend, Prime Minister Tayyip Erdogan denied that there is tension between his government and the military following accusations that Land Forces Commander General Yasar Buyukanit acted outside the law in the fight against PKK terrorists. The main opposition CHP and the press have speculated that the prosecutor in the case acted under the influence of the AK Party to discredit General Buyukanit, who is expected to become chief of staff in August. Erdogan praised the army as "one of our most important institutions" and said his government would respect the military's rules of promotion. Erdogan also urged his party members to stand behind Finance Minister Kemal Unakitan, who has been under fire by opposition and the media for alleged corruption. A censure motion against Unakitan will be brought to the Parliament on Tuesday. Erdogan also noted that there will not be early elections, and reaffirmed that the current parliament will elect Turkey's next president in 2007.

#### Gul on Iran

Hurriyet, Milliyet, Sabah, Cumhuriyet, Radikal, Zaman and others: Foreign Minister Abdullah Gul warned that any international intervention against Iran due to its nuclear activities would affect Turkey. "Turkey will be deeply affected by any possible sanctions against Iran," Gul told ruling AK Party lawmakers on Sunday. Gul noted that nearly 70,000 trucks travel from Turkey to Central Asian countries each year across Iranian territory. Foreign Minister Gul said that International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) Chairman Muhammad al-Baradei told him in Vienna last week that only Turkey or Russia could

persuade Iran to suspend its nuclear program. "Israel also denies it has a nuclear weapons program," Gul added, "but 25-30 years ago there were reports that the Israelis were developing nuclear weapons. If Iran's nuclear program is dangerous, then Israel's nuclear program is just as dangerous."

Picking up on this perceived double standard on the Iran issue, commentator Kamuran Ozbir of the nationalist Ortadogu criticizes the international community for ignoring Israel's nuclear weapons: "The international community hastens to control the Iranian nuclear program while doing nothing about Israel's nuclear weapons. When you read Western commentators, you learn that Iranian possession of nuclear weapons poses a serious risk of war in the region. It is interesting to observe that there is no mention of risk posed by Israel's nuclear weapons. President Bush's emphasis on the use of force as an option is both unrealistic and irresponsible. The Bush administration has not gotten anywhere by its bluffing, but it still keeps repeating the same tactic."

**Poll: AKP Way Ahead of Other Parties**

According to a poll commissioned by pro-government, Islamist-oriented Yeni Safak, 74.2 percent of Turks believe the US is the biggest threat to world peace. The US is followed by Israel at 7.9 percent. Only 2 percent view Iran as the biggest threat. 62.5 percent say Turkey should remain neutral in the event of a US military operation against Iran, 2.9 percent say Turkey should side with the US, and 19.4 percent say Turkey should side with Iran. 56.1 of those surveyed believe there is a "clash of civilizations" between the "Christian west" and

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Islam. 61.9 percent would approve a referendum to join the EU, while 30.7 would oppose it. On the film "Valley of the Wolves - Iraq," 37.4 percent had a positive opinion, 19.7 percent negative, and 42.9 percent had no opinion. If general elections were held today, votes would be distributed as follows: AKP 42.7 percent, CHP 17.2, MHP 10.6, DYP 8.9, pro-Kurdish DTP 6.6, ANAP 5.6, and others 4.7. 2,639 people in 12 provinces responded to questions in face-to-face interviews for the survey, which was carried out under the supervision of academics from Middle East Technical University, Cankaya University and Kirikkale University.

**Istanbul Bilgi University Holds Kurdish Conference**  
Hurriyet, Milliyet, Sabah, Cumhuriyet, Radikal, Zaman and others: A number of prominent academics, politicians and journalists participated in a conference at Istanbul's Bilgi University on "Turkey's Kurdish Question" over the weekend. The mayor of Turkey's mainly Kurdish southeastern province of Diyarbakir, Osman Baydemir, said the Kurdish problem in Turkey is not related to terrorism, but rather has economic, political and social aspects. Professor Baskin Oran said Kurds in Turkey are demanding minority rights despite the fact that they are a constituent people of the Turkish Republic. Kurdish politician and former cabinet minister Serafettin Elci criticized state policies that have focused on a military solution to the problem. "Turkey's traditional anti-Kurdish policy is bankrupt. The Kurdish people's right to self-governance must be recognized without the Kurds breaking off from Turkey. The two peoples still have a chance to coexist," Elci said. Columnist Hasan Cemal said the Kurds should openly denounce PKK violence. "The PKK must lay down its arms and we must all work together for Turkey's EU membership," Cemal said.

**Izmir Port Lacks Necessary Security**  
Vatan reports that Turkey's Aegean port of Izmir has been listed in a US Homeland Security Department report on world ports that do not have necessary security measures.

The report says that the security of containers imported into the US is inadequate, and warned that WMD could be brought into the US through shipments from foreign ports. "The Izmir port is far from meeting US security standards," according to the report.

TV HIGHLIGHTS  
NTV News (7: 00 a.m.)

Domestic News

- About 3,000 leftist and pro-Kurdish demonstrators commemorated in a peaceful rally to mark the killing of 11 people in clashes with security forces in Istanbul's Gazi neighborhood eleven years ago.
- A Turkish soldier was killed during fighting with PKK terrorists in the southeastern province of Sirnak over the weekend.
- Turkish Cyprus leader Mehmet Ali Talat has been discharged from Istanbul hospital after a bypass operation, and has returned to Cyprus.

International News

- Shiite Prime Minister Ibrahim al-Jafari said he will not step aside despite strong pressure from Iraq's Sunnis

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and Kurds.

- Britain's Sunday Telegraph reported that Iran has built a secret underground command center in Tehran as its leaders prepare for a confrontation with the West over its controversial nuclear activities.
- Car bombs and mortar barrages rocked the Shiite-dominated Sadr City in Baghdad on Sunday, killing at least 46 and wounding more than 100 others.
- Tom Fox, a US national who was among four Christian activists kidnapped last year in Iraq, was killed by insurgents.

Economic News

- Prime Minister Erdogan said the nomination of a successor to Turkey's Central Bank (CB) Governor, Sureyya Serdengecti, would take some time. CB Deputy-Governor Erdem Basci is viewed as the most likely candidate for the critical post.
- PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC) projected that Turkey would become world's 12th largest economy by 2050.
- The OECD will carry out research about money laundering activities in Turkey later this year.

WILSON